

S1 00:03 Welcome to the Sports Medicine podcast, brought to you by the Sydney and J.L. Huffines Institute for Sports Medicine and Human Performance in the Department of Health and Kinesiology at Texas A&M University. At the Huffines Institute, we're always working to facilitate, apply, and bring you the most up-to-date coverage of the wide world that is sports medicine and human performance, all in a language you can understand and share with your friends. And now, here's our host, the director of the Huffines Institute, Dr. Tim Lightfoot.

S2 00:32 Hello and welcome to the weekly podcast from the Huffines Institute for Sports Medicine and Human Performance. I'm your host, Tim Lightfoot, and I'm so pleased that you are all with us, that you took the time to download us and you're listening. We strive every week to bring you an interesting person from the world of sports medicine and human performance, and this week is no exception to that. We welcome back to the studio after a long absence, Mr. John Tanguay from here at Texas A&M. Welcome back to the podcast John.

S3 00:59 Thanks for having me back. It's great to be here.

S2 01:01 We're lucky to have you back. I'm going to tell the audience a little bit about you and then we'll go from there. Some of you may remember, one of our earliest podcasts was with John. Actually, it was number eight, our number eight podcast back in November of 2010. We had John come in and talk. He is the Assistant Athletic Director for Performance Nutrition here at Texas A&M. So he handles all the nutrition of all of our athletes, our what, 640 or 50 athletes or whatever that we have.

S3 01:29 Yeah, 600 something.

S2 01:30 600 and something. That's right. Everything is a rounding error at that point, right?

S3 01:35 That's right.

S2 01:37 So John got his bachelor's degree in Zoology in 2002. He got his master's degree in Nutritional Science in 2007 from the University of New Hampshire. He's a registered dietitian. He has many research interests as you might imagine: nutrition, sports nutrition, supplements, he did a dietetic internship with the University of Houston, and he is a member of the practice group Sports and Cardiovascular Nutritionists in the country. So again, welcome back for those people that have been long-time listeners. And those that haven't, I really would recommend that you go back and folks, go back and listen to our early podcasts because what was really interesting about that podcast and what stood out was the role that supplements was starting to play at that point. And that's only gotten bigger, the whole nutraceutical thing. Let's just start with that because consumers are just inundated with advertisement for nutraceuticals out there. How do you handle that, because there's a lot of those that are on the banned list for NCAA?

S3 02:34 Yeah. I mean, there's a lot of stuff that's out there on the market. We try to filter through everything that's out there and find stuff that's going to be safe for the athletes to take, stuff that's going to actually enhance their performance, and find something that will fit within their budget. Obviously, our focus is on food first, so really trying to get the athletes' diet in the place where it should be. But if we can enhance their performance through some supplementation, we try to do that.

S2 03:03 How do you track that now? And again, because we have to-- so many times, athletics get hung up on drug tests or whatever with something that they claim it was in their nutritional supplement. So how do you work to keep 600 and some odd athletes out of trouble that way?

- S3 03:19 I mean, it's really a broad-base education. We don't recommend anything that's not an SF third-party certified and that's a third-party sports supplementation group. It's really education getting out in front of them and that's something that's always a conversation that we have with the teams with the support staffs, the athletic trainers, the strength coaches, and making sure that everyone is on the same page as far as what kind of our general guidelines are, and then what more specifically we're trying to do with each individual athlete.
- S2 03:50 Yeah. So it is certainly a team effort as far as you work. You're not by yourself in telling the athletes, "Hey look, you've got to watch out what you're eating because this could cause some trouble down the road." But you're working with the strength and conditioning coaches which have a lot of hands-on work with the athletes as well.
- S3 04:05 Yeah. Well, they'll refer the athletes to us for those specific supplement recommendations. And I'm the designated authority for the athletic department to recommend and approve supplements for athletes. If an athlete brings as a supplement and it's something that we don't want them to take, we have them sign off on it, that we've told them that this could potentially lead to a positive drug test and it's not something that we recommend. And if they'd take it, they're taking it on their own and they're taking their own risk. So we definitely cover our self and make sure that we both acknowledge that we've had a conversation about the product.
- S2 04:38 Now, you're working with 18 to 22-year-old individuals. What would you say the percentage of the athletes that come to you and say, "Hey, I'd like to try taking this supplement." Is there interest in that or is that just something that they don't even think about?
- S3 04:52 Yeah, I mean, there is interest. I mean, there're certain sports that are more kind of supplement driven, let's say. Our male swimmers are a little bit into supplements. Baseballs is into supplements. They're two that come to mind initially. But certainly, we try to drive the conversation back to the diet, back to food, and how they can enhance their diet through the foods that they're eating. If they come to us and they're skipping breakfast, and eating fast food for lunch and dinner, and want to take a supplement that they think they can help them gain weight or perform better, we'll steer them back to their diet, the dietary aspect and say, "Well, let's work on getting breakfast every day. Let's work on cutting down the amount of fast food that you're eating." And then maybe once we get that stuff working right, then maybe we can look into the supplement. But you're not going to get any sort of a benefit out of the supplement if you're not fueling your body right in the first place.
- S2 05:43 Right. Now, seven years ago, when you and I chatted, you did not have at your disposal some of the facilities that you have now. In particular, when we talked about how you manage your day athlete, it was like, "Well, they go out and eat on their own and there's really no way that we can kind of oversee all of them." How was that changed for you in the last seven years?
- S3 06:02 Yeah, it's definitely gone more from an educational standpoint of how to go out and find food and how to prepare food, to how to utilize all the resources that we're able to offer the student athletes here at Texas A&M. Three years ago, three and a half years ago, we built the Slocum Nutrition Center and that's opened during the spring and fall semesters for 15 meals a week. Student athletes are able to eat at our morning fueling station free of charge. They are able to get dinner Monday through Thursday and then lunch on Friday and a meal on Sunday free of charge, just as being on an active roster. We have a meal plan for lunch Monday through Thursday. So we make a lot of resources available for them. It's centrally located in the Bright Complex, so that's where they have their academics. They're kind of in that area

throughout the day.

S3 06:57 So it's really helping them get the most out of those good healthy foods that we're providing and utilize all the other sorts of complementary foods that we offer; from bars to fruit, to smoothies, to recovery products and incorporating all of those things into a balanced meal plan to really fuel their body right. And then there's a little bit of that other stuff because there's a couple of meals that you can have on your own on the weekends. So making sure that they're remembering that and getting some stuff that can get them through the weekends and then getting them utilize all the great resources that we're offering to them.

S2 07:34 Well, I really like that the turn, a phrase that you used and that is, "While it was just educational before, it's now educational, and we provide access for them to these resources to allow them to be better nourished."

S3 07:48 Right. Our athletic department has invested a lot in fueling our athletes properly. And I think it's a great resource that we have.

S2 07:58 Well, I know there was some national spotlight turned on some of these a few years back when one of the championships men's basketball team, one of the players, I think one MVP or whatever complained or stated that he often didn't have money to eat during the week and so he didn't eat. And I know there was a lot of attention placed on our athletes fed appropriately at that point.

S3 08:18 Yeah. But right around that time, it was something that was already in discussion when he brought that up, there's certainly people working on that behind the scenes. But around that time, we went from really only being able to provide the athletes with bars. And I mean, I'm sure you've heard about like bagels and nuts and fruit and Gatorade and some hydration and recovery products to being able to make the athlete whole again and provide them with whole foods. And that's where some of these meals have come from with this change in legislation, kind of the deregulation of fueling the collegiate athlete.

S3 08:54 And that's another point, that's what another thing that happened in seven years, there's been some deregulation from the NCAA about what you can provide for the athlete, somewhat you couldn't before. I mean, just in the last year or so, they've changed rules about proteins, so we're able to use different sources of protein when we're providing them their recovery products. So really give the student athlete something that's really specific to them as opposed to before, there were certain guidelines with how much protein we could have and certain nutritional products. And now we can really tell or teach individual athlete and make sure they're getting exactly what they need.

S2 09:28 So let's switch, shift gears a little bit, being a sports nutrition person for an athletic team sounds sexy, it's full of glory, right?

S3 09:38 Sounds like it is.

S2 09:39 Sounds like it. What I want you to do for the audience is describe your day because I'm always impressed. Anytime I'm over in that area and I'm interacting with you or some of the other couple of dietitians that you have on staff, it's amazing how much work that you guys have to put in to make this all work.

S3 09:56 Yeah, absolutely.

S2 09:58 So, what's your day like?

S3 09:59 We get in early before the student athletes get in. I was in around 5:00 o'clock this morning, little before, make sure that all of our nutrition supplies are out for them

when they arrive for their early morning training. So all of our bars are out. We've got Gatorade, water, hydration products out, different stuff so that if they haven't had breakfast in the morning, if they're training early, they've got a light snack they can have prior to that activity. So make sure that everything is set up before they get there. And then I typically get my workout at that point, kind of when we're waiting for them to show up. And then we're there to make sure that they are grabbing something before they workout, that they have fueled themselves and they train. Right now, I'm mostly working with football. So they train at 7:00 AM, 9:00, 11:00 and 1:00. So I'm there with a group of student workers that I have and we make those customized recovery smoothies for the athletes so that when they're done, they've got something that's cold and refreshing and gives them the nutrients they need to help their bodies recover.

S3 11:02 In between that time, I'm kind of going up to my office doing some work up there, whether be ordering, managing our inventory, managing our student worker schedules, working on menus for the Slocum Nutrition Center, all sorts of all the other kind of aspects of my job. I try to be present at the meals. So like I said, we're serving morning meal, breakfast, lunch and dinner in there. So I'm in there interacting with the student athletes helping them, helping guide them in the choices that they're making in the dining hall, helping talk to them about their goals, about what they're trying to achieve, about how to try and influence the plates that they're making. Right now, football trains again in the afternoon. So about 2:00 o'clock prior to the runs, 1:30, 2:00 o'clock, I go back down the locker room again, make sure that we have snacks out so that they've got something to top off their energy levels, to hydrate prior to that training session.

S3 11:55 Couple of days a week, we do hydration testing. So we collect their pee and monitor kind of how concentrated that is, and monitor how hydrated they are, and give them feedback on their hydration status going into their afternoon training session. Give them some education on how they can do a little bit better job if they need to of keeping themselves hydrated. And then I'm out there at training sessions. I like to see how the athletes are performing, see how they're responding to their diet and their nutrition program. Then we handle recovery after the training session, so we distribute more recovery products. And then they're up to dinner and dinner right now is from 5:00 to 7:30. So I'm up there again at dinner interacting with the athletes, kind of helping guide their choices, eating myself.

S2 12:43 Somewhere in there, you got to get that in you.

S3 12:44 Somewhere in there. And then kind of is finishing up, end my day. So about 7:00 or 7:30 or so, I start-- I roll home and--

S2 12:53 Then you redo it next day.

S3 12:54 -- go to bed pretty soon because I'm getting up early the next day. But it's a full day and it's-- I mean, that's kind of a general guideline. But in between there, we do body composition testing. We've got meetings. We've got performance meetings. We're groups of athletic training, and strength and conditioning, and sports science, and administrators get together and discuss plans of operation for the student athletes. You do one-on-one counseling sessions where you come in and meet one on one with the athletes. And whether it's performance based or whether it's more clinical based, discussing kind of where they're at in their nutrition and how you can either enhance kind of whatever their issue is.

S3 13:31 We do meal plans, so I've kind of streamlined that process, but I spent some time making meal plans for the athletes and kind of helping to coach them through that

process. Like I said before, we do the grocery shopping tour. So I'll take student athletes to the grocery store, and show them around, and try to teach them how to make healthy choices. Get the best, good selections out of there. Stuff that's easy to prepare, and stuff that's going to be good for your body, and stuff that if you're not going to eat it tonight, that you can maybe store for a little bit of time, and cook it when you're ready. We work with the Slocum staff to do cooking sessions and education sessions.

S2 14:06 Oh, so you teach them how to cook too?

S3 14:07 We teach them how to cook a little bit, yeah. Simple recipes, but we try to really take a comprehensive approach too. From whether it's one on one, or whether it's in group settings, or just really trying to help them make the most of all the foods that we're providing them and help them to fuel their body.

S2 14:26 Now, one of the things that impresses me is that you talked about your student workers. The athlete's department only hire-- /only has three of y'all, right? Three registered dietitians. You had two when your--

S3 14:38 We have two and we're currently--

S2 14:39 Hiring one.

S3 14:40 -- hiring a third, yes.

S2 14:41 So if you're a sports RD and you want to apply, you can go on the website and find--

S3 14:45 That's right.

S2 14:46 -- it and apply. They're looking a third one, but that's an amazing workload for 600 and some odd athletes for two RDs to handle all that.

S3 14:55 It is. I mean, you think about it, there's-- we've got something like-- I don't know the numbers, but more than 10 full-time strength coaches, athletic trainers, academic staff. You've got a lot of resources in those areas. And from the nutrition side of things, there's only two of us. So we're lucky we're going to be hiring a third full-time person. That will be three full-time registered dietitians between 600 athletes. I think my goal is a 1 to 100 ratio so you can kind of tell what I'm going for.

S2 15:24 Sure.

S3 15:25 But yeah, we're lucky we've got a lot of resources. We've got a lot of support from the athletic department. And we do have I think a really strong program and this third person will really help us reach more athletes and really be more involved with how they're-- what foods they're choosing and how they're fueling their bodies.

S2 15:42 Now, people might be listening to this going, "Wow, I didn't realize they did that much stuff for the college athletes in nutrition?" But this is not unusual for the big-- especially for the big universities, that this is a fairly-- how am I going to say? Average is not the right thing, but this is what everybody does nowadays. They have to pay attention to the nutrition.

S3 15:59 Yeah, it is. When I started at A&M in 2008, there were 16 of us that were full time in collegiate athletics. In 2010, when I did the last podcast, it was probably more than that, but probably not more than 30. And now just about every Division I collegiate program has at least one full-time sports dietitian. Many have three, four, up to I think seven in our neighbors in Austin.

S2 16:27 Who shall remain nameless at this point, right?

- S3 16:31 And it's expanding in the NFL and major league baseball just passed something in part of their collective bargaining agreement that they all have to have at least a consultant dietitian on staff. So definitely, sports nutrition is a growing field and it's really exciting to be a part of it.
- S2 16:45 It's coming. It's coming. So we talked a while ago about athletes and their knowledge about supplements. What do you find about athletes and their knowledge about nutrition in general? Especially, when they make that transition from high school to college, are they at a big deficit or have they taken an interest and they've learned about that or beforehand?
- S3 17:04 I think that they understand the importance. We're part of the recruiting process, so they know that when they're coming here, that nutrition is going to be important for them. I think that how our program is set up that we're lucky enough to be able to provide so many resources for the student athletes really makes them buy in really quickly. We do these little surveys, kind of like questions about kind of how they fuel their body, how often they choose certain foods, how often they skip meals, if they're taking any supplements. Just kind of a general-- almost like a food frequency questionnaire. And I just did it with a freshman. We just got done doing their body composition testing and they say-- when they answer the questions, they say, "Well, should I answer it since I've been here in the two weeks, since I've been here or should I answer it how I was before I got here?" So I think that their dietary habits change relatively quickly and I think that they're buying in pretty quickly, and it's a good thing.
- S2 17:56 So as we near the end of the podcast here, I'd like to revisit something we talked about in 2010. And we always try to help people understand how people got to where they are. So did you at age five decide that you were interested in sports nutrition? Now people may not know that you're a heck of a long distance runner, you run marathons and even Boston marathon. So look at the tapes of Boston Marathon, you'll see John Tanguay in it. Is this something you always wanted to do or how did you get to this point in your life?
- S3 18:26 Well, as you said earlier, I was a zoology undergraduate major, so I was kind of always interested in the biological sciences, but didn't necessarily know how I wanted to apply it. And as I was finishing up college and kind of got out of the dorms and was living on my own, really kind of got into cooking foods and trying to eat healthier. And I've always been relatively active, always been into sports. I was a high school athlete and I was an Alpine skier in college. So kind of always into sport, kind of in between undergraduate and grad school, took a nutritional biochemistry class. And that was the application of all the science. It kind of tied it all together. It made all the processes that we learned about make sense. I went from there and applied to grad school in nutritional sciences and had to do a year of prerequisites to kind of catch up my nutritional background, but kind of hit the ground running with that. And really dove into that and did my master's research on the athletes at University of New Hampshire, chose my dietetic internship so that I could come here to Texas A&M and work in an athletic department. And I was lucky enough that when I finished my dietetic internship, they offered me a position here. And then I've been able to grow here, so I haven't really had to jump around. So it's been nice.
- S2 19:44 Well excellent. Well thank you so much for being with us today.
- S3 19:47 Thanks for having me.
- S2 19:48 You're more than welcome. And most of our regular listeners know, this is a time when I'm going to ask you to give us your take home message. So if you had to think

about what you want someone to remember from this podcast, what's that one thing?

S3 19:59 I mean, we started off talking about supplements, but I think that really, if you're going to follow a good nutrition plan, you really should come back to focusing on whole foods. So really getting those whole foods, those natural foods, not stuff that comes from packages or things that you get out of the drive-through window, but really fueling your body with those whole foods. And if you can do that, a lot of your issues that people may have with food and fueling and weight and all of those kind of concerns kind of even themselves out. It's really, bring it back to the basic as far as focusing on those whole foods. And then if we get that figured out, then we can focus on supplements. But really, really focusing on food first.

S2 20:39 Thanks again.

S3 20:40 Thanks a lot.

S2 20:40 Glad to have you here.

S3 20:42 My pleasure.

S2 20:43 We were so glad that all of you took the time to download us and listen. You also know at this point, when we do our podcast question of the week and so here with our podcast question of the week is Carlos Guevara, our producer.

S4 20:56 Apart from the meal plan given to the athletes here at Texas A&M, what are some ways Mr. Tanguay promotes a healthy diet for our athletes?

S2 21:03 Great podcast question Carlos. Be the first one to send us an email with the correct answer and you'll win one of our nifty podcast T-shirts. That email address is huffines@tamu.edu. So again, we want to thank all of you for taking the time to be with us. Thank you John again for being with us today. It was great having you back.

S3 21:24 It's great to be here.

S2 21:25 We won't wait seven years again, I don't think.

S3 21:28 Anytime.

S2 21:28 There you go. And so we hope that all of you join us next week when we have another interesting person from the world of sports medicine and human performance. And until then, we hope that you stay active and healthy.

S1 21:39 The executive producer of the Sports Medicine podcast is Kenneth McIntyre. This podcast is licensed by the Huffines Institute at Texas A&M, under a Creative Commons 3.0 license. You can share it as much as you want and you can talk or blog about it all you want, just don't change it or charge money for it. This podcast is made possible by support from the Omar Smith family and the Sydney and J.L. Huffines family. Our music was composed, performed, and graciously provided by David Zeltner Productions, your source for quality music and music production since 1992. Find him at www.davidzeltner.com. Our opening and closing credits were provided by John Miles Productions at johnmilesproductions.com. If you have questions or comments, please sent them to huffines@tamu.edu. From all of us at the Huffines Institute, we hope you have an active and healthy week.